

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 MCT-01 SSM-03
/080 W

-----191558Z 086998 /43

P R 191508Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4084
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE 257
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2408

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION MAY 13-19

REF: BEIRUT 2269 (DTG 121427Z MAY 77)

1. SUMMARY: THIS WEEK, SYRIAN FORCES ENGAGED IN HEAVY FIGHTING
WITH SMUGGLERS IN NORTH LEBANESE TOWN OF BILLA. LARGE BOMB EX-
PLODED IN ASHRAFIYAH. THREE MONTH PERIOD ENDED UNDER WHICH LEB-
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ANESE ARMY OFFICERS COULD RETIRE WITH SPECIAL BENEFITS. KUWAITI
AND SAUDI AMBASSADORS TOLD PRESS THAT THERE WOULD BE NO ARAB AID
UNTIL SECURITY SITUATION STABILIZED. KUWAITI AMBASSADOR ALSO HELD
MEETING WITH KFUR FRONT LEADERS. WALID JUNBLATT LEFT FOR TWO-DAY
VISIT TO DAMASCUS. POLICE RESUMED NIGHT PATROLS IN BEIRUT. END
SUMMARY.

2. FIGHTING IN NORTHERN TOWN.

ON MAY 14 AND 15 SYRIAN ASF FORCES ENGAGED IN HEAVY FIGHTING WITH RESIDENTS OF TOWN OF BILLA, TRADITIONAL STRONGHOLD OF SMUGGLERS AND CRIMINALS IN NORTH LEBANON (SEPTTEL). SYRIANS CONTINUED TO SEARCH VILLAGE AND BLOW UP HOUSES OF SUSPECTED COMBATANTS MAY 16 AND 17. TOTAL SYRIAN CASUALTIES, ACCORDING TO LEBANESE MILITARY AND OTHER SOURCES, INCLUDED ELEVEN KILLED, 15 TO 25 WOUNDED, AS WELL AS TEN TO FIFTEEN MISSING AND POSSIBLE CAPTURED. SYRIANS GAVE A PHALANGE DELEGATION IN DAMASCUS ULTIMATUM TO TURN OVER MEN RESPONSIBLE FOR KILLING SYRIAN TROOPS, BUT PHALANGE DELEGATION DENIED DIRECT INVOLVEMENT OR KNOWLEDGE OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE. AS OF MAY 19, EXPECTATIONS ARE THAT EPISODE WILL END WITHOUT FURTHER VIOLENCE AND HOSTAGES ON BOTH SIDES WILL BE RETURNED.

3. BOMB EXPLODES IN ASHRAFIYAH.

LARGE BOMB--MORE POWERFUL THAN ONE WHICH KILLED SOME 50 PEOPLE AT AKKAOUI IN JANUARY--EXPLODED IN ASHRAFIYAH NEAR NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY HEADQUARTERS NIGHT OF MAY 17-18. FOUR BUILDINGS WERE DESTROYED, BUT THERE WERE NO CASUALTIES. ALTHOUGH ASHRAFIYAH RESIDENTS HAVE BEEN BLAMING "COMMUNISTS," THERE IS NO REAL EVIDENCE ON IDENTITY OF PERPETRATORS.

4. SPECIAL ARMY RESIGNATIONS.

ON MAY 16 THREE MONTH PERIOD ENDED UNDER WHICH LEBANESE ARMY OFFICERS COULD RETIRE WITH SPECIAL BENEFITS AS PROVIDED BY FEB 14 DECREE LAW. OUT OF TOTAL OFFICER CORPS OF 950, ABOUT 145 CHRISTIAN OFFICERS AND 50 MUSLIM OFFICERS RESIGNED, INCLUDING FORMER ARMY COMMANDER HANNA SAID, FORMER PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER MOUSSA KANAAN AND FORMER SURETE GENERALE DIRECTOR ANTOINE DAHDAH. (OVER-CONFIDENTIAL

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ALL OFFICERS CORPS IS ABOUT 60 PERCENT CHRISTIAN.) AMONG OFFICERS WHO REFUSED TO RESIGN WERE CHRISTIAN EXTREMISTS SUCH AS LT. COLONEL ANTOINE BARAKAT AND MAJOR FOUAD MALIK, AS WELL AS LEBANESE ARMY LEADER LT. AHMED KHATIB. RESIGNATION PROGRAM HELPED RESTORE MORE EQUITABLE BALANCE AMONG MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN OFFICERS. HOWEVER, PROGRAM FAILED TO ACHIEVE WIDESPREAD HOUSECLEANING OF EXTREMIST OFFICERS, WHICH GOVERNMENT HOPED WOULD BE FIRST STEP IN BUILDING NEW ARMY. (SEPTTEL)

5. ARAB AID DEPENDS ON SECURITY.

KUWAITI AND SAUDI AMBASSADORS TO BEIRUT TOLD LOCAL PRESS MAY 16 THAT THERE WOULD BE NO ARAB AID TO LEBANON UNTIL SECURITY SITUATION STABILIZED. NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY LEADER CAMILLE CHAMOUN HAS INTERPRETED ARAB DELAYS AS WAY OF PRESSURING CHRISTIANS TO COMPROMISE ON APPLICATION OF CAIRO ACCORDS AND TO GET ON WITH POLITICAL DIALOGUE. CHAMOUN RESPONDED BY TELLING L'ORIENT-LE JOUR MAY 16 THAT: "IT IS DUTY OF THE LEBANESE...TO UNDERTAKE ALONE THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THEIR COUNTRY." (SEPTTEL)

6. KUWAITI AMBASSADOR MEETS KFUR FRONT.

KUWAITI AMBASSADOR BUAYJAN HELD MEETING WITH KFUR FRONT LEADERS CAMILLE CHAMOUN, PIERRE GEMAYEL, FATHER CHARBEL KASSIS, AND SULEIMAN FRANGIEH MAY 13. MEETING APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN ANOTHER EPISODE IN CONTINUING IMPASSE ON CAIRO ACCORDS. CHAMOUN SUBSEQUENTLY REMARKED TO EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE THAT BUAYJAN WAS "ANTI-CHRISTIAN" AND NOT INTERESTED IN IMMEDIATE APPLICATION OF SARKIS INTERPRETATION OF CAIRO ACCORDS (SEPTTEL).

7. WALID JUNBLATT IN DAMASCUS.

WALID JUNBLATT LEFT FOR DAMASCUS MAY 19 FOR TWO-DAY VISIT, ACCORDING TO BEIRUT PRESS. HE WAS REPORTEDLY ACCOMPANIED BY SHAWAT SHOCAIR, FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF OF SYRIAN ARMY.

8. MISCELLANEOUS.

ON MAY 12 POLICE BEGAN NIGHT PATROLS IN BEIRUT FOR FIRST TIME IN ABOUT TWO YEARS, AS 570 ARMED PATROLMEN TOOK TO STREETS. THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FIRST 12 OF 50 BUSES BEING PROVIDED BY FRANCE ARRIVED MAY 16. THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY REOPENED UNDER A CHARGE MAY 18. LANE

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2459713
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
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TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, LE
To: STATE
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